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THE AMERICAN FREE PRODUCE JOURNAL.

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CIRCULAR.

At the late Annual Meeting of "The American Free Produce Association," it was resolved to appoint agents to introduce the subject of abstaining from the produce of slave labor, into the several anti-slavery societies in the United States. The Executive Committee, having been intrusted with the selection of suitable persons to perform that duty, respectfully request those to whom this circular shall be addressed, to call the attention of the members of the Anti-Slavery Societies, or Conventions, with which they have connection, to this important branch of the anti-slavery reform. The Committee are confident that this subject has not been regarded heretofore with sufficient interest by any considerable portion of American abolitionists; and that it requires nothing more than an enlightened consideration to commend itself to all of them, as intimately connected with individual duty, and the peaceful liberation of the southern captive. They are, therefore, desirous of availing themselves of every opportunity to present it to the serious attention of their anti-slavery brethren.

The cherished sentiment of abolitionists has ever been, that slavery is, under all circumstances, an inherent and unqualified wrong—an impious and daring violation of the dearest and most sacred rights of the enslaved. Hence they have believed, and declared, that a solemn and imperative duty is resting on every one, to strive for its immediate overthrow. In the support of this position, many of them have labored faithfully and long; devoting their time and energies in endeavoring to convince their fellow citizens of its justice; and manifesting their sincerity and their confidence in its truth, by the cheerful sacrifice of their wealth and standing in the community. When they have beheld the religious communion to which they have been attached from childhood, sacrificing truth on the altar of oppression, and the Political Party to which they have been bound by the strong chords of interest and inclination, upholding the claims of the oppressor, they have withdrawn all connection from them with willing hearts.—Yet have they been engaged, at the same time, in rendering to the system their most effectual support. The silent approval of the community—the countenance of the professedly religious—and the more direct sanction of the crafty politician, may, and do each exert an influence calculated to strengthen the power of slavery; but the original and leading inducement to its continuance, is the wealth arising from the sale of its products, and of these the great body of abolitionists have been the willing purchasers and consumers. While refusing to give the least sanction to slavery through the indirect influences of public opinion, the church and the state, they have been unhesitatingly sustaining its existence through the more direct and powerful channel of buying and consuming its productions. They have thus been actual supporters of the system. On the inconsistency of their course it is unnecessary here to dwell; for it is too manifest, too glaring, to need any exposition. It is equally needless to attempt to point out their duty; for if they give the subject proper reflection, they must become convinced of the impropriety of supporting a system to which they are conscientiously opposed—and of the obligation which is resting upon them to withdraw their support from it, in this as in every other connection.—Apart, too, from the sense of right, which should induce them to refuse to receive the product of a brother's oppression, the effect upon the mind of the community should lead them to such a course. With how much more power and effect could they then raise their voices against slavery! Now they stand convicted before the world, of supporting in practice, what they condemn in theory. Then they would appear as maintaining by the purity of their example, the truth of their avowed principles. Now they are beheld rebuking the slave-

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holder, and yet sustaining him in the continuance of his guilt. Then they would be known as condemning his robbery—and showing the justice of their condemnation, by refusing to share with him the fruits of oppression. Each one of them would become a powerful anti-slavery lecturer—every where maintaining a glorious testimony—every where manifesting, in practice, his faithfulness and sincerity.

Nor should their character in the community for consistency and sincerity be deemed of little moment. The most difficult part of their task is not to convince their fellow citizens of the sinfulness of slavery, nor of the duty of its early abolition. They have a more difficult work to perform : that of convincing their fellow citizens of the North as well as of the South of the purity of their intentions—of their desire to promote the best interests of the enslaver and the enslaved—and this they can do in no more ready and effectual manner, than by manifesting a just regard for their principles, in the conscientious consistency of their practice. To condemn slavery—to reproach the slaveholder—and to eulogize the blessings of liberty, do not afford to a rational opponent that evidence of their sincerity, which would be given continually by a self-denying abstinence from the produce of the slave's toil.

To the oft repeated assertion that abstinence—even by the whole number of abolitionists—would not produce any sensible direct influence upon slavery, it is deemed necessary only to reply, that although faithfulness on the part of those enlisted in the anti-slavery enterprize may not at the present time produce much effect, it may, nevertheless, lead to equal faithfulness in those who shall hereafter engage in the same work, so as to have eventually a very great influence on the system—and that, should it never produce any important influence upon slavery, they would not, therefore, be absolved from the performance of that which is, in itself, a matter of duty. Obligation does not always depend upon the result of exertion. The hour of accomplishment may be within the passing day, or in some year of the distant future; and yet, in either case, there is the same necessity, and the same duty of laboring for its attainment. What if the power of slavery were increased ten-fold in the coming hour;—would one of those now striving for its overthrow cease from exertion ? And even if its abolition were but a doubtful problem, which had never been solved ; if God had not written on the broad scroll of His providence, the evidence of their ultimate success, would the uncertainty of their triumph excuse them from their earnest labor ? Would they not still press onward in their work, rejoicing in the knowledge that He who teaches them their present duty, holds in His hand the destiny of the future—and that, whether in the end successful, or at length defeated, they would, for their faithfulness to His command, receive His richest blessing ? And, in a matter so clear to every intelligent mind as that of abstinence from slave produce, shall they refuse to fulfil their duty, and neglect to avail themselves of a powerful weapon to promote their eventual success, simply because they are not confident that, by such means, they will be exerting an all-powerful influence on the system which they are seeking to abolish ? Not if they act consistently with their former profession ; for they have ever asserted that they should be mindful of their duty—as it is theirs—and take no note of consequences—as they are in the hand of God. Not if they are faithful to the slave ; for common-sense and continual experience clearly show, that to consume the produce of his toil is to rivet his chain—and that to refuse to receive it, is to rebuke his oppressor. Nor yet if they have a proper regard for themselves ; for blessed, in their own exertion, are they who maintain, through sacrifice, the truth of their principles—and blessed, in the result of their labor, shall be those who, through self-denying consistency, shall awaken the truth in one oppressor's heart !

By order of the Executive Committee,—

TH. S. CAVENDER,

Cor. Sec. Am. F. P. Association.

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ADDRESS TO PROFESSING CHRISTIANS.

Beloved Friends,—Feeling with you a common interest in the establishment of the principles taught by the *sinless One*, and desirous of hastening the time when His kingdom shall be established throughout the earth, and all the people shall know the Lord, it becomes our duty and our privilege ever to bear our testimony against the oppression of His poor and the robbing of His heritage. He whose mission it was to “preach deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound,” has shown us by His life a glorious example of faith and spotless purity which it should be our ardent desire to follow. One of the greatest obstacles to the establishment of Christianity is the oppression that exists in the earth; the injustice of man toward his brother man. Blessed as this nation is by the light which knowledge and religion have shed upon her path; possessing privileges beyond all other lands; teaching politically the equality of mankind; religiously their universal brotherhood—she sustains within her borders a system of oppression which defies the power of language to describe. The State has lent her aid to invest it with all the dignity which legislative enactments can confer. Presbytery, Conference, Assembly, Association, and the various ecclesiastical courts of the land, have enwrapped it with the vestments of religion, and thus attempted to shield it from destruction. Who that loves the church but must mourn for its pollutions? Who that reveres the religion of Jesus but must weep for its desecration? Who does not burn with eagerness to purify the church from the stain its approval of oppression has cast upon it? Trusting that such are your feelings and your desires; that you are but awaiting to hear the voice of truth proclaim, “This is the way, walk ye therein,” we have felt constrained to address you on a subject which presses heavily on our minds.

How shall American slavery be abolished? How can I best perform my duty to the oppressor and the oppressed? How acquit myself of the responsibility that rests upon me in this matter, and “wash my hands in innocence?”—These are questions that every Christian should seriously consider. As our situations in life differ; as the circumstances by which we are surrounded are various, so will the means by which we strive to attain our object differ in their character. There is, however, one plan of action that suits all circumstances, all conditions, which is as universal in its application, as binding upon the conscience of every individual, as is the law upon which it is based, “Thou shalt not steal.” Its very simplicity has caused it to be overlooked and rejected. Like one of old, we are willing to undertake some mighty thing, but when the price of purity is to dip seven times in Jordan, our reply is, are not Abana and Parphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel, may we not wash in them and be clean? Many have washed in the rivers of Damascus, but the leprosy still clings to us; let us now seek the Jordan of consistent action, if haply we may be made whole. Abstinence, total abstinence from the use of slave-labor products is demanded by consistency and by every principle of sound morality, for it is only as we ourselves are free from supporting it that we can successfully labor for the overthrow of slavery.

In all deviations from the path of moral rectitude, the *tempter* is justly regarded as more guilty than the *tempted*. Let us look at American slavery in the light of this principle, and how will appear the relative guilt of the consumer and producer, of the tempter and the tempted? The consumer holds out to the planter certain pecuniary inducements by which the latter is encouraged to cultivate rice, sugar, cotton, &c. by slave labor. That the articles are thus raised, the consumer is perfectly aware; he knows that the original producer, the slave, is not compensated for his labor, that his toil is not the voluntary effort of a freeman, but is extorted by the fear of punishment. Although cognisant of this fact, his offers are annually renewed to the planter; who, perchance, goaded by conscience on the one hand, and seduced by the glittering bribe of the consumer on the other, yields to the temptation of the latter; stifles the still small voice which pleads for justice to his brother;

violates the better feelings of his manhood; continues from year to year his system of oppression, which annually fastens the fetters on 150,000 new victims.

We assert, then, that the purchasers and consumers of slave produce are the supporters of the slave system, responsible for its continuance, and justly chargeable with all its wrongs. Without their aid slavery could not exist. They are the motive power of this vast and complicated machinery of human wrongs. Let such as truly hate oppression, and love freedom, who would see all men enjoying the "glorious liberty of the sons of God," refuse longer to lend their aid to support this system of iniquity. The Lord hath pronounced judgment upon "him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong: that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work." And how beautifully simple are the means by which we can testify against the wickedness of the oppressor! The plan is so clear that none may misunderstand it, and the "way-faring man, though a fool, cannot err therein." "Let him that stole steal no more." Is it not common sense and common justice to regard the receiver of stolen goods and prompter of the theft as more guilty of the crime than his paid agent who performed the deed? Until we are willing to spurn the gains of oppression, will our boasted philanthropy, our vaunted regard for justice, our apparent zeal for religion, our professed love for the precepts of Jesus, avail us, when weighed against our gross inconsistency, our disregard to the sufferings of the poor of his heritage?—for saith the Holy One, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."

Until we cease to be a partaker in his sins, the slaveholder may well turn a deaf ear to our remonstrances, or hurl back upon us the just and biting retort, "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?"

Let us then "cease to do evil;" let us no longer be partakers of the "gains of oppression;"—then, when we plead with the slaveholder to "undo the heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free," we may do it with pure lips and undefiled, our actions testifying to our sincerity and consistency. Then may we say to him, Brother we have sinned, we have kept back the wages of the laborer, we have defrauded the hireling of his dues; the luxuries that we enjoy, the conveniences that administer to our comfort, are many of them obtained by the unrequited labor of your slaves. Henceforth we renounce them, no longer using that which is not rightly ours, or sanction a system so manifestly unjust as that of slavery. To accomplish this we have undergone many inconveniences, made many sacrifices, and we call upon you thus to act, thus to follow where principle leads. If truth, justice, honesty, require greater sacrifices of you than us; if your merit be greater than ours, then shall your souls more fully experience the blessings of them that are ready to perish.—Could we adopt this language the slaveholder would more deeply feel the justice and disinterestedness of our appeal, and thus would the day of emancipation be hastened, when the trump of jubilee shall proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof.

Brethren, we affectionately commend these things to your conscience and understanding. If our language be that of truth let it sink deep into your souls, and may you so speak and so act that when He cometh whose right it is to make inquisition for blood, ye shall be guiltless in His sight.

By direction of the Ex. Com. Am. Free Produce Association.

JAMES MOTT,
President.

BENJAMIN S. JONES,
Secretary.

Those who receive marked copies of this number of the Journal, are hereby authorized and requested to make collections for the American Free Produce Association, and immediately remit the same to SARAH A. PALMER, Treasurer, No. 29 North Fifth street, Philadelphia.